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## Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition

### Djihād

(2,288 words)

etymologically signifies an effort directed towards a determined objective. (Cf. *idjtihād*: the work of the scholar-jurists in seeking the solution of legal problems; *mudjāhada* or, again, *djihād* : an effort directed upon oneself for the attainment of moral and religious perfection. Certain writers, particularly among those of Shī'ite persuasion, qualify This *djihād* as “spiritual *djihād*” and as “the greater *djihād*”, in opposition to the *djihād* which is our present concern and which is called “physical *djihād*” or “the lesser *djihād*”. It is, however, very much more usual for the term *djihād* to denote This latter form of “effort”).

In law, according to general doctrine and in historical tradition, the *djihād* consists of military action with the object of the expansion of Islam and, if need be, of its defence.

The notion stems from the fundamental principle of the universality of Islam: This religion, along with the temporal power which it implies, ought to embrace to whole universe, if necessary by force. The principle, however, must be partially combined with another which tolerates the existence, within the Islamic community itself, of the adherents of “the religions with holy books”, *i.e.*, Christians, Jews and *Madjūs* [*q.v.*]. As far as these latter are concerned the *djihād* ceases as soon as they agree to submit to the political authority of Islam and to pay the poll tax ( *djizya* [*q.v.*] ) and the land tax ( *kharādj* [*q.v.*] ). As long as the question could still, in fact, be posed, a controversy existed—generally resolved by a negative answer—on the question as to whether the Christians and Jews of the Arabian peninsula were entitled to such

treatment as of right. To the nonscriptuaries, in particular the idolaters, This half measure has no application according to the opinion of the majority: their conversion to Islam is obligatory under pain of being put to death or reduced into slavery.

In principle, the djihād is the one form of war which is permissible in Islam, for, in theory, Islam must constitute a single community organized under ¶ a single authority and any armed conflict between Muslims is prohibited.

Following, however, the disintegration of Muslim unity and the appearance, beginning in the middle of the 2nd/8th century, of an ever increasing number of independent States, the question arose as to how the wars which sprang up between them were to be classified. They were never included within the strict notion of djihād—even in the case of wars between states of different religious persuasion—at least according to the general Sunnī doctrine; and it is only by an abuse of language that This term is sometimes applied to them, while those authors who seek for a precise terminology label them only as *kitāl* or *muḳātala* (conflict, war). There is even hesitation in referring to the struggle against the renegade groups in Islam as djihād. The viewpoint of Shīʿite doctrine is not the same, for, according to the Shīʿa, a refusal to subscribe to their teaching is equivalent to unbelief ( *kufr* ). The same holds good, *a fortiori*, for the Khāridjite doctrine [see further TAKFĪR ].

The djihād is a duty. This precept is laid down in all the sources. It is true that there are to be found in the Qurʾān divergent, and even contradictory, texts. These are classified by the doctrine, apart from certain variations of detail, into four successive categories: those which enjoin pardon for offences and encourage the invitation to Islam by peaceful persuasion; those which enjoin fighting to ward off aggression; those which enjoin the initiative in attack, provided it is not within the four sacred months; and those which enjoin the initiative in attack absolutely, at all times and in all places. In sum, these differences correspond to the stages in the development of Muḥammad’s thought and to the modifications of policy resulting from particular circumstances; the Meccan period during which Muḥammad, in general, confines himself to moral and religious teaching, and the Medina period when, having become the leader of a politico-religious community, he is able to undertake, spontaneously, the struggle against those who do not wish to join This community or submit to his authority. The doctrine holds that the later texts abrogate the former contradictory texts (the theory of *naskh* [q.v.]), to such effect that only those of the last category remain indubitably valid; and, accordingly, the rule on the subject may be formulated in these absolute terms: “the fight (djihād) is obligatory even when they (the unbelievers) have not themselves started it”.

In two isolated opinions, however, attempts were made to temper the rule in some respects. According to one of these views, attributed to ʿAṭā (d. 114/ 732-3), the ancient prohibition against fighting during the sacred months remains valid; while according to the other,

attributed to Sufyān al-Thawrī (born 97/715), the djihād is obligatory only in defence; it is simply recommended (*li 'l-nadb*) in attack. According to a view held by modern orientalist scholarship, Muḥammad's conception of the djihād as attack applied only in relation to the peoples of Arabia; its general application was the result of the *idjinā'* (general consensus of opinion) of the immediately succeeding generations. At root, of course, This involves the problem as to whether Muḥammad had conceived of Islam as universal or not.

The opinion of al-Thawrī appears to have been adopted by al-Djāḥiẓ. The heterodox movement of the Aḥmadiyya [*q.v.*], beginning towards the end of the 19th century, would go further than al-Thawrī inasmuch as it refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the djihād even as a recommended activity. Cf., in the same sense, the doctrine of Bābism (see BĀB).

According to the general doctrine of the Shī'ā. due account taken of their dogma concerning "the absence of the Imām", who alone has the necessary competence to order war, the practice of the djihād is necessarily suspended until the re-appearance of the Imām or the *ad hoc* appointment of a vicar designated by him for This task. The Zaydī sect, however, which does not recognize This dogma, follows the same teaching as that of the Sunnī doctrine.

Characteristics of the duty of djihād. The djihād is not an end in itself but a means which, in itself, is an evil (*fasād*), but which becomes legitimate and necessary by reason of the objective towards which it is directed: to rid the world of a greater evil; it is "good" from the fact that its purpose is "good" (*ḥasan li-ḥusn ghayrih*).

A religious duty. The djihād has the effect of extending the sway of the faith; it is prescribed by God and his Prophet; the Muslim dedicates himself to the djihād in- the same way that, in Christianity, the monk dedicates himself to the service of God; in the same vein it is said in different *ḥadīths* that "the djihād is the monasticism of Islam"; the djihād is "an act of pure devotion"; it is "one of the gates to Paradise"; rich heavenly rewards are guaranteed for those who devote themselves to it; those who fall in the djihād are the martyrs of the faith, etc. A substantial part of the doctrine reckons the djihād among the very "pillars" (*arkan*) of the religion, along with prayer and fasting etc. It is a duty which falls upon every Muslim who is male, free and able-bodied. It is generally considered that non-Muslims may be called upon to assist the Muslims in the djihād.

A "collective" obligation (*farḍ kifāya*) in contrast to *farḍ 'ayn*. The *farḍ kifāya* is that duty which is imposed upon the community considered as a whole and which only becomes obligatory for each individual in particular to the extent that his intervention is necessary for the realization of the purpose envisaged by the law. Thus, as soon as there exists a group of Muslims whose number is sufficient to fulfil the needs of a particular conflict, the obligation of the djihād no longer rests on the others. The general teaching is that the duty of djihād falls, in the first place, individually as a *farḍ 'ayn*, upon those who live in the territory nearest to the

enemy, and that the same holds good in the case of the inhabitants of a town which is besieged. In the organized State, however, the appreciation of the precise moment at which the djihād is transformed into an *‘ayn* obligation is a matter for the discretion of the sovereign; so that, in the case of general mobilization, the djihād loses, for all the members of the community, its character of *farḍ kifāya*, and becomes, instead, *farḍ ‘ayn*.

All This implies, however, that for those who hold the reins of authority and, in particular, the sovereign, the djihād is always an individual duty, since their own personal action is necessary in every case. Where there are several independent Muslim states, the duty will fall upon the ruler of the state which is nearest to the enemy.

Further, the duty of the djihād is relative and contingent in This dual sense that, on the one hand, it only comes into being when the circumstances are favourable and of such a nature as to offer some hope of a victorious outcome, and, on the other hand, the fulfilment of the duty may be renounced in consideration of the payment by the enemy of goods reaching a certain value, if such policy appears to be in conformity with the interests of the moment.

Its subsidiary character. Since the djihād is nothing more than a means to effect conversion to Islam or submission to its authority, there is only occasion to undertake it in circumstances where the people against whom it is directed have first been invited to join Islam. Discussion turned on the question as to whether it was necessary, on This ground, to address a formal invitation to the enemy. The general doctrine holds that since Islam is sufficiently widespread in the world, all peoples are presumed to know that they have been invited to join it. It is observed, however, that it would be desirable to repeat the invitation, except in cases where there is ground for apprehension that the enemy, thus forewarned, would profit from such a delay by better organizing his defences and, in This way, compromising the successful outcome of the djihād.

Its perpetual character. The duty of the djihād exists as long as the universal domination of Islam has not been attained. “Until the day of the resurrection”, and “until the end of the world” say the maxims. Peace with non-Muslim nations is, therefore, a provisional state of affairs only; the chance of circumstances alone can justify it temporarily. Furthermore there can be no question of genuine peace treaties with these nations; only truces, whose duration ought not, in principle, to exceed ten years, are authorized. But even such truces are precarious, inasmuch as they can, before they expire, be repudiated unilaterally should it appear more profitable for Islam to resume the conflict. It is, however, recognized that such repudiation should be brought to the notice of the infidel party, and that he should be afforded sufficient opportunity to be able to disseminate the news of it throughout the whole of his territory [see SULH].

Its defensive as well as offensive character. The djihād has principally an offensive character; but it is equally a djihād when it is a case of defending Islam against aggression. This indeed, is the essential purpose of the *ribāṭ* [q.v.] undertaken by isolated groups or individuals settled on the frontiers of Islam. The *ribāṭ* is a particularly meritorious act.

Finally, there is at the present time a thesis, of a wholly apologetic character, according to which Islam relies for its expansion exclusively upon persuasion and other peaceful means, and the djihād is only authorized in cases of “self defence” and of “support owed to a defenceless ally or brother”. Disregarding entirely the previous doctrine and historical tradition, as well as the texts of the Ḳur’ān and the *sunna* on the basis of which it was formulated, but claiming, even so, to remain within the bounds of strict orthodoxy, This thesis takes into account only those early texts which state the contrary (v. *supra* ).

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